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UNDRO NEWS

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OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
DISASTER RELIEF
CO-ORDINATOR

BUREAU DU COORDONNATEUR
DES NATIONS UNIES POUR LES
SECOURS EN CAS
DE CATASTROPHE

Editorial

The first few weeks of the New Year have brought home to millions in Western Europe and elsewhere mankind's extreme vulnerability to meteorological disasters. To start with, many parts of the world witnessed the hottest winter since World War II. This was quickly followed, in February, by some of the worst storms to hit Europe in decades. Scores of lives were lost and damage to property, across a vast swath of the continent, was estimated in billions of dollars, with the United Kingdom alone suffering some U.S. $8.5 billion losses in flooded homes, demolished infrastructure and destroyed communications.

Had this disaster hit the less developed regions of Asia or Africa, the toll would probably have been infinitely higher - with hundreds if not thousands of lives lost and the meagre possessions and livelihoods of whole communities destroyed, requiring a major international relief effort to help the survivors. For the people of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and parts of Eastern Europe, however, the destructive impact of the storms and floods was partly compensated by insurance cover, a safety net which is virtually non-existent in most parts of the developing world.

Claims on insurance companies for the February storms are estimated to have totalled nearly nine billion dollars. Clearly, the private sector has as great a stake in disaster prevention and mitigation as have national governments and communities. Disaster prevention and mitigation efforts need to be a co-operative effort of governments, the private sector - particularly the insurance sector - the scientific community and non-governmental organizations.

The New Year has seen the launch, by the United Nations, of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction - IDNDR. Its aim is to deploy, by the turn of the century, effective strategies to shield populations, as far as possible, from the ravages of nature. Close co-operation from the private sector and, in particular, insurance and re-insurance companies, can go a long way in crowning the IDNDR's campaign with success.

En ce début de l'année 1990, des millions de personnes, en Europe occidentale et ailleurs, ont directement pris conscience de notre extrême vulnérabilité face aux intempéries. Alors que certains points du globe connaissaient l'hiver le plus doux depuis la deuxième guerre mondiale, des tempêtes d'une violence inégalée depuis des dizaines d'années sévissaient, en février, sur presque toute l'Europe. Le bilan a été lourd : de nombreuses pertes en vies humaines et des dégats matériels estimés à plusieurs milliards de dollars. Rien qu'au Royaume-Uni, les habitations inondées, les moyens de communication et l'infrastructure endommagés ont représenté des pertes s'élevant à quelque 8,5 milliards de dollars.

Dans des régions moins industrialisées d'Afrique ou d'Asie, une telle catastrophe aurait infligé des pertes infiniment plus lourdes, entraînant la mort de centaines, voire de milliers de personnes, et détruisant les maigres ressources de communautés entières. En Allemagne, en Belgique, en France, aux Pays-Bas, au Royaume-Uni, en Suisse ainsi que dans certains pays d'Europe de l'Est, les polices d'assurances ont permi une indemnisation partielle des victimes des tempêtes et des inondations; mais dans la plupart des pays en développement, cette forme de protection matérielle n'existe guère.

On estime à presque neuf milliards de dollars la somme totale des demandes d'indemnisation auprès des compagnies d'assurances, à la suite des sinistres de février. Cela démontre clairement que la prévention et l'atténuation des catastrophes sont tout autant l'affaire du secteur privé que celle des communautés locales et des gouvernements. Un effort de coopération au niveau des actions de prévention et d'atténuation des catastrophes s'impose, donc, aux gouvernements, au secteur privé - notamment celui des assurances - aux scientifiques, ainsi qu'aux organisations non gouvernementales.

1990 est l'année du lancement de la Décennie Internationale de la Prévention des Catastrophes Naturelles (IDNDR), dont le but est la mise en place, d'ici la fin du siècle, de stratégies qui permettent de protéger les populations contre les assauts de la nature. Ainsi, la participation du secteur privé et, tout particulièrement, celle des compagnies d'assurance et de réassurance, est un élément essentiel à la garantie du succès de la campagne menée par la Décennie.

Keystone

Storm damage in the United Kingdom

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Information Officer and Responsible Editor: O. Mengin
UNDRO Editorial Board:
Habib Boulares, S.W.A. Gunn, Vit Kamik
Franklin McDonald, Yuki Sato

Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO), Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Tel.: (022) 734-60-11 - Telex 28148 undr ch.

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Cyclone Ravages Several South Pacific Islands

Tropical cyclone *Ofa* hit Western Samoa on 1 February and raged through the South Pacific for five days causing widespread damage in the island nations of Western Samoa, Tokelau, Niue and Tonga. It made more than 10,000 people homeless.

Ofa was the first major cyclone to form since the South Pacific storm season began in November 1989. As it was a relatively slow-moving storm, it was extremely destructive. It brought with it high winds of 180 to 190 km per hour, rain, raging seas and tidal waves up to 15 metres high and also affected Tuvalu, the French territory of Wallis and Futuna, and American Samoa.

Ofa washed away bridges and roads; roofs were blown off and several coastal houses were swept into the sea; and it destroyed communication links leading to an initial news blackout from the affected areas. Throughout the emergency, UNDRO remained in constant touch with its representative in Apia, Western Samoa, in order to provide first hand information on the disaster situation to the international community as it became available.

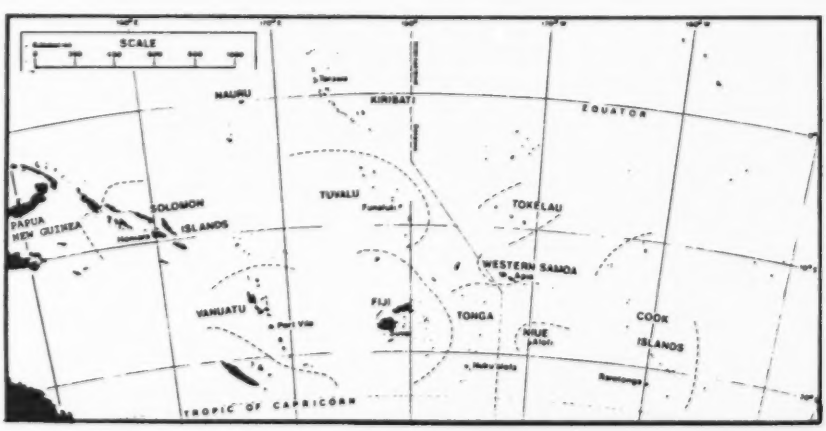
Eight people were reported killed by the cyclone from 1 to 4 February, but the death toll was expected to rise since a number of persons were still listed as missing. Initial damage was estimated at US $200 million in Western Samoa alone.

Australian and United States transport aircraft flew in plastic sheeting, mosquito nets, chain saws, medical and technical personnel and equipment and other relief supplies to Western Samoa, and a New Zealand Air Force plane transported medical supplies, water pumps, fuel pumps and generators to Niue. The storm destroyed Niue's only hospital and hotel.

In Tonga, the islands of Niuafo'ou, Niuatoputapu and Tafahi were declared disaster areas by the Kingdom's Minister of Disaster Relief and Reconstruction.

Severe damage was reported to crops, electricity, communications and water supply. For example, in Western Samoa, it was estimated that bananas, breadfruit, taro, vegetables and other root crops were totally destroyed. New crops would take six months to produce. Tree crops were almost totally destroyed; 50 percent of livestock was lost; 80 per cent of all telecommunications services were affected by the cyclone; drinking water became scarce. A sub-committee was set up under the Disaster Relief Committee to control the distribution of emergency supplies.

SOUTH PACIFIC REGION



READEX FICHE

Cyclone damage in the South Pacific.

UNDRO launched an international appeal for assistance on 6 February after receiving a preliminary damage and needs assessment from its representative in Apia. The United Nations Office in Apia established a data base to keep track of contributions made by various donors, in order to improve relief co-ordination and to avoid duplication of effort. At the end of February, total contributions reported to UNDRO exceeded US $1.8 million. This figure did not include goods for which no cash value had been provided.

The Economic and Social Council of the U.N., at the fourth meeting of its organizational session, on 8 February, adopted a resolution introduced by the Government of New Zealand urging all members of the international community to contribute to relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in the affected countries and territories. ■

Since 1979, UNDRO has responded to requests from various countries of the South Pacific for assistance in disaster relief management, preparedness and prevention, namely in Fiji, Niue, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga as well as in bordering countries of South East Asia and the South Pacific, including Papua New Guinea. In December 1985/January 1986, assistance was provided in helping develop a national disaster emergency plan for Vanuatu.

In order to review the current status of disaster preparedness and prevention in some of the above-mentioned South Pacific Island countries - Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tokelau and Western Samoa - and to identify areas requiring additional technical assistance in these and other countries, UNDRO recently sent two consultants to:

- **review the natural and man-made hazards to which these countries are subject, and assess respective risks and capacities to mitigate them;**
- **define individually by country, or regionally, external technical assistance needs for strengthened disaster management capacity over the next five years;**
- **summarize ongoing or planned external technical assistance for disaster mitigation and assess the extent to which this assistance will meet the identified needs;**
- **formulate a set of technical assistance activities which will meet outstanding needs;**
- **propose the ways in which the management infrastructure may need to be developed in order to conduct these activities.**

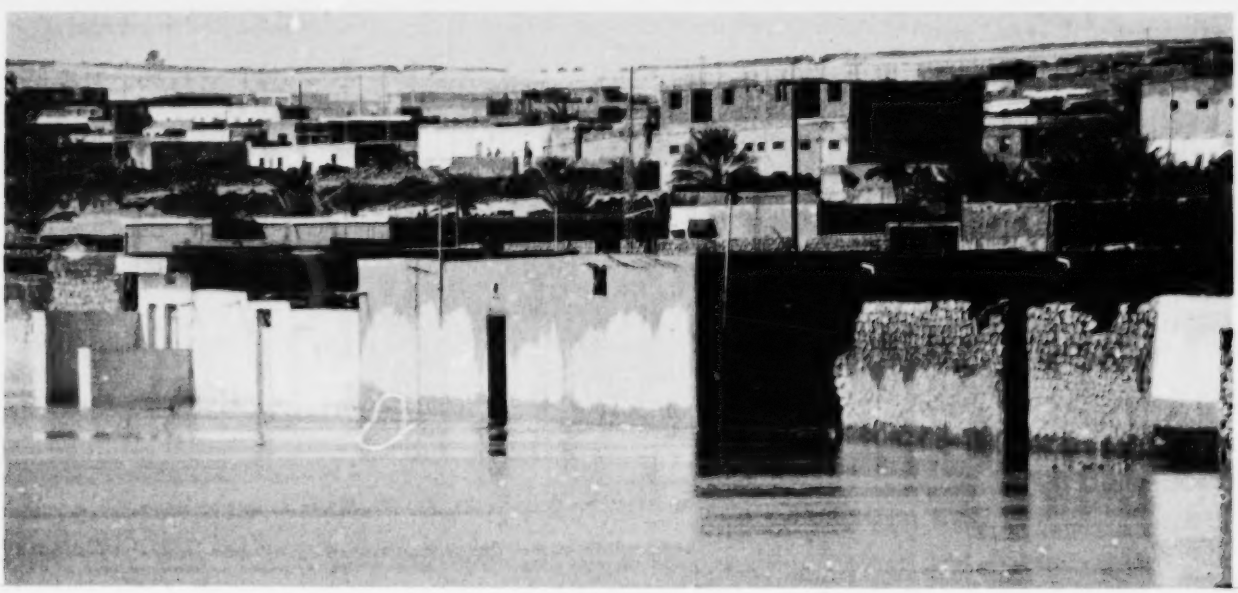
Floods in Tunisia:

Touring the affected areas

Torrential rains from 20 to 24 January 1990 caused flooding and widespread damage, estimated at US $223 million, to housing, infrastructure (roads, railways, bridges) and agriculture in central and southern Tunisia. Over 7,500 water wells for irrigation of market gardens, which provide 30 percent of the national produce, were damaged or destroyed, representing an additional economic disaster. The most affected areas were situated in the provinces of Sidi Bou Zid, Gafsa, Tozeur, Kebili, Kasserine, Kairouan, Sfax, Gabes, Medenine and Sousse. *(See UNDRO News Jan/Feb. 1990).*

The Tunisian Government requested international assistance through UNDRO. The Office launched its first appeal on 24 January 1990 and continued to keep the international community informed through its situation reports up to 13 February, when the emergency phase was considered to be over. At the request of the Government the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, accompanied by a Relief Co-ordination Officer, visited Tunisia to help promote and support relief co-ordination efforts.

Together with a World Food Programme representative, the UNDRO Co-ordination Officer visited the affected areas of Kairouan, Kasserine and Sidi Bou Zid on 27 and 28 January. The following is based on his personal observations.



Flooded houses in Tunisia, January 1990.

Many people were living under trees and one of their priority needs was construction materials to rebuild their houses.

UNDRO/F.Gentiloni

Kairouan
(two hours by road from Tunis)

Some 20 kms before the town of Kairouan, the road passed through wide agricultural fields now under water. A few houses could be seen at a distance, but they had been built on elevated ground. The road embankments were damaged.

The Governor had just returned from a helicopter visit to isolated areas. He said that the areas most affected were situated towards the border with the province of Sidi Bou Zid (southwest) such as El Ala, Hadjeb el Aioun and Sidi Nasr Allah. One person was reported dead. Also, additional land towards Sousse had been flooded when gates at a major dam were opened to avoid overflowing. The dam, however, had saved the city from flooding and the province had been less affected than others such as Tozeur.

In some places the rainfall in five days had corresponded to four to five times the annual average. After two years of drought, many peasants had welcomed the rain as a blessing.

The main needs were the restoration of highways, dirt roads, bridges and water supply; construction materials such as cement, iron, bricks (available locally); food; and tents so that the homeless could vacate schools and mosques. The Government policy was to encourage affected people to help themselves, by providing them with construction materials.

In a village, a local committee was busy receiving and assembling gifts for the victims. An old man, poorly dressed, who had just donated a bagful of clothes, proudly showed off the receipt given to him. A pile of bank notes lay on the table. Members of the committee

Le Monde

The boundaries and names on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance of the United Nations.

(volunteer civil servants) reported that in two days they had gathered almost 16,000 dinars in cash (more than US $17,000). This was just one example of the impressive movement of solidarity across the country.

Kasserine
(four hours from Tunis, altitude: 717 m.)

The town was cut in half since the bridge over the river that flows through the centre of the city had been washed away. On visiting this area with the Governor, a group of homeless people started a heated debate on what appeared to be a misunderstanding about the distribution of aid.

The governor explained that the effects of the floods had been amplified by the under-development of this mountainous province with its high rate of unemployment and only 400 kms of asphalted roads. The southern part had been the most affected and, there, poor rural communities had suffered the most. As a result of land erosion, rainwater had flowed down the mountains towards the valleys and flooded the plains around Sidi Bou Zid.

Five persons had lost their lives, 750 families had been left without shelter; 1,000 homes had been totally destroyed and 5,000 partially damaged; 28 schools had been damaged or destroyed and 1,000 head of livestock had been declared lost, though that figure was expected to rise considerably.

The needs were: cash, construction materials and cement (for repair of wells, bridges and roads), tents, warm clothing, blankets, antibiotics, pumps, food (semolina, sardines, sugar, oil, rice and butter). The Government's policy was to strengthen the distribution of aid to rural communities so as to avoid migration towards already overcrowded towns.

In the remote locality of Ain Genan, a number of tents had been set up on the outskirts of the village. Here, a group of poorly-dressed people, some of them barefoot in the cold, voiced their grievances. After confirming the receipt of food aid, they eloquently (and politely) enumerated their needs, saying that they required a) repairs to the access road to enable them to continue their trade and to transport the sick to the hospital, b) repairs to the bank of the *oued* * to avoid overflows in the future and c) construction materials for their houses.

* *Rivers and streams in North Africa.*

UNDRO/F.Gentiloni

Flood damage in the town of Kasserine

Many houses made of bricks and earth, with little or no cement, had been damaged or destroyed.

Sidi Bou Zid
(five to six hours from Tunis)

After the rupture of a dike, agricultural areas around the town of Sidi Bou Zid were submerged. The data provided by the authorities reflected the magnitude of the damage in this area: 12,000 hectares of irrigated agricultural land (50 percent of the total) and 4,000 hectares of other agricultural land had been flooded; 7,000 wells (i.e. 60 percent of the provincial total), 4,000 lodgings, 30 health centres and 200 classrooms had been damaged or destroyed. The railway line had also experienced damage. Vegetables and young plants had suffered the most. The areas surrounding the town and the southern part of the province had been most affected.

The immediate needs were: tents, blankets, boots, pumps and food. The port and airport of the town of Sfax, about 200 km from Kairouan, remained the most convenient delivery points for foreign donations. Five days after the floods, at least 60 communities were accessible by land. Even though Army trucks tackled difficult road conditions to rescue victims or bring much needed supplies, most of the aid had to be delivered by air.

A helicopter tour confirmed the scale of the disaster. Fertile agricultural fields had been converted into large inaccessible swamps, in the middle of which people had sought refuge on the roofs of flooded houses or taken shelter under trees on higher ground. Schools, usually deserted on Sundays, were full of homeless people. The banks of many *oueds* had been devastated. A main bridge near Maknassy on the road to Sidi Bou Zid had been washed away. Many *gourbis*** had been totally destroyed; other houses had collapsed roofs or walls. Damage to housing could reportedly have been much worse if a programme of *degourbisation* (consisting of replacing *gourbis* with houses of cement and bricks) had not been under way. On the other hand, earth/brick houses which had been flooded but were left standing, could still collapse.

*** *Local houses made of bricks and earth with very little or no cement.*

***

Now that the emergency relief phase is over, UNDRO, within the framework of its mandate of disaster mitigation, is sending two experts to help the country build up its flood prevention and preparedness capabilities.

The expert in disaster prevention will provide recommendations, in consultation with the relevant national authorities, on measures to be taken for hazard mapping, risk assessment, flood control, land use and the siting and design of structures in the high risk areas, in order to minimize the social and economic impact of future floods.

The terms of reference for the preparedness expert include reviewing the extent to which the existing emergency preparedness plans proved appropriate and were successfully applied during the recent floods, with particular attention to warning measures, information management, mobilization and deployment of resources and relief distribution and co-ordination. On that basis, he will provide recommendations for the improvement of the emergency plan in order to minimize the social and economic impact of future floods including the clear definition of responsibilities of each of the services capable of intervention. He will also propose training activities addressed to the different levels of the Civil Protection system to improve the capacity of flood disaster management. ■

Helping Romania:

Uplifting "an economy on the brink of disaster"

Following the political events of late December 1989, the Government of Romania requested UNDRO's assistance to launch an appeal for international assistance. A relief co-ordination officer immediately left Geneva for Bucharest, and the Romanian Government came to rely on UNDRO as the principal channel of communication and co-ordination of international aid. During the twelve days that followed, he was directly involved in the work of the newly set up Committee for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Aid.

Later in January, at the request of the Government, UNDRO's delegate returned to Romania to help in the co-ordination and distribution of international relief assistance. He noted that all 41 districts of Romania were receiving international relief assistance and priority was being given to cities where food shortages were most critical. Until the next main harvest this summer, Romania would have to rely on imports and the spring greenhouse produce. Over 350 Romanian trucks and ten refrigerator trains were engaged in collecting donated food (perishable items) throughout Europe.

To bring the donor community up to date on the situation, UNDRO held an information meeting in Geneva on 8 February. The Government of Romania was represented by Mr. Vadim Aroneanu,

Marie Farrell/WHO

Because of lack of heating facilities, staff in a Bucharest hospital wore dressing gowns over their work clothes to keep warm.

Du Biafra d'hier à l'Arménie ou au Cambodge de demain, pionniers de la seconde génération de l'action humanitaire, les *french doctors* n'ont jamais voulu attenter à la souveraineté des Etats. Pas plus que les rédacteurs des traités relatifs aux droits de l'homme. Ils réclament seulement que celle-ci s'exerce de façon humanitaire. A cette fin, il convient de passer des proclamations éthiques, politiques, morales, et techniques, à un texte de droit positif, obligatoire pour tous les Etats.

Un mouvement de démocratie directe a été engagé dans ce sens l'été dernier par mon département ministériel. Il consiste en une *pétition universelle* pour le droit d'assistance humanitaire dont le logo représente une mappemonde recouverte d'un pansement et soutenue par une main charitable. L'objectif est atteint : un million et demi de signatures en France. Et demain l'Europe ... Les destinataires : tous les Etats auxquels les individus signataires réclament la reconnaissance de ce couloir d'accès aux victimes. Corridor de survie, respectueux des prérogatives gouvernementales. Droit de transit pacifique, desintéressé, sanitaire et provisoire.

Le Président François Mitterrand, inaugurant la session de Paris de la C.S.C.E. le 30 mai 1989, avait ouvert la voie en affirmant que : *"l'obligation de non-ingérence s'arrête à l'endroit précis où naît le risque de non-assistance"*.

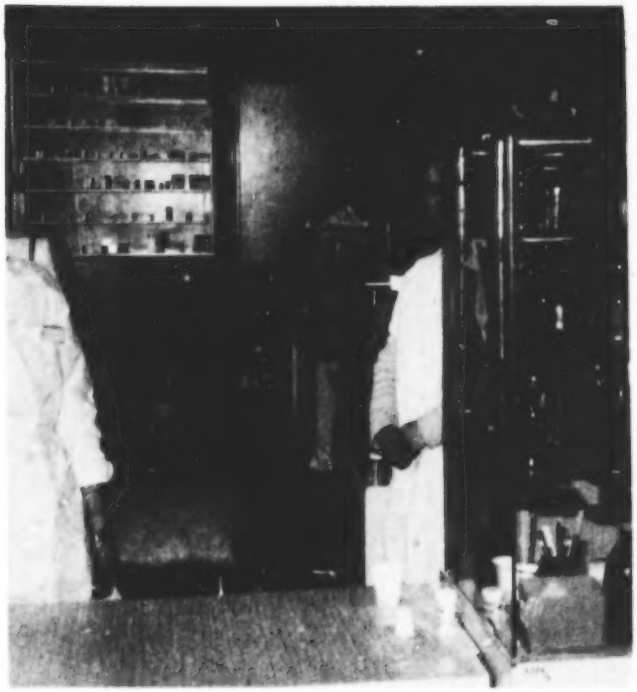
Le 14 septembre 1989, à Saint Jacques - de -Compostelle, l' Institut de Droit International, qui regroupe les plus éminents juristes du monde, a adopté une résolution dans laquelle il affirme : "L'offre, par un Etat, un groupe d'Etats, une organisation internationale ou un organisme humanitaire impartial tel que le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge (CICR), de secours alimentaires ou sanitaires à un Etat dont la population est gravement menacée dans sa vie ou sa santé, ne saurait être considérée comme une intervention illicite dans les affaires intérieures de cet Etat ...; les secours seront accordés sans discrimination. Les Etats sur le territoire desquels de telles situations de détresse existent ne refuseront pas arbitrairement de pareilles offres de secours humanitaires".

Le droit d'ingérence humanitaire est bien pour demain, et certains devront rougir d'avoir - sous prétexte d'une vision périmée de la souveraineté - retardé sa promulgation, entravé les secouristes, empêché l'action humanitaire, et de s'être ainsi rendus coupables de non-assistance à personnes et à peuples en danger de mort. La souveraineté protège l'Etat des convoitises totalitaires, elle ne prive pas son peuple des convoirs humanitaires.

Il convient de rappeler en permanence la règle : en matière d'intervention d'urgence, il n'y a pas d'obligation de résultat, mais toujours des obligations d'intention et de technique. Des moyens optimum au services des êtres humains blessés. ■

Dr Bernard Kouchner, Secrétaire d'Etat auprès du Premier Ministre (France) Chargé de l'Action Humanitaire, (à droite) pendant la Conférence qu'il a donnée à l'UNDRO, le 23 janvier 1990. (A gauche), le Coordonnateur de l'UNDRO M. M'hamed Essaafi.

En 1971 le Dr Kouchner a créé ***Médecins sans frontières*** qu'il a dirigé jusqu'en 1979. En 1980, il a fondé ***Médecins du Monde*** qu'il a dirigé jusqu'en 1988 date de sa nomination comme Secrétaire d'Etat auprès du Premier Ministre. Auparavant, il est intervenu d'abord au Biafra, puis en Jordanie, au Liban, en Syrie, au Kurdistan, au Tchad, en Erythrée, au Vietnam, au Cambodge, en Thaïlande, en Afghanistan, au Soudan, au Honduras et ailleurs, constamment mobilisé au service des affamés, des opprimés, des sinistrés. En 1979 il a reçu le prix *Dag Hammarskjold* pour les Droits de l'Homme et le prix *Louise Weiss* (Parlement Européen) pour son action en faveur des "boat people"; en 1981, le prix *Athinai* de la fondation Onassis, et en 1984, le prix *Européen* également pour son action pour les Droits de l'Homme.



A hospital laboratory in Bucharest. According to a delegate of the World Health Organization, just returned from Romania, medicine chests in western homes are often better stocked than the dispensaries of some hospitals in Romania.

Marie Farrell/WHO

Secretary of the Central Commission of the Romanian Goverment for the co-ordination of international assistance. The meeting was attended by representatives of 32 Permanent Missions, 17 inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, and seven United Nations agencies.

Mr. Aroneanu expressed the gratitude of the people and Government of Romania to governments, national and international organizations, and to the tens of thousands of anonymous donors for the rapid and spontaneous aid to his country. He also thanked the mass media for their help and support. He stressed his country's continuing need for assistance, with priority being given to food and medical supplies, and spoke of the new Romanian authorities' concern with uplifting "an economy on the brink of disaster". To meet the immediate basic needs of the population, Mr. Aroneanu appealed for 60,000 tons of meat (10 tons canned), 5,000 tons of canned fish, 20,000 tons of rice, 1,000 tons of milk powder, 10,000 tons of cheese, 200 million eggs and 5,000 tons of baby food. These quantities, he said, took into account the negotiations that were under way with the European Economic Community (EEC) for emergency aid. He added that the list of priority food and medical needs that UNDRO had disseminated in its situation reports remained valid.

On this subject, the representative of the EEC indicated that the Community would, in principle, be providing food supplies valued at 40 million Ecus, over and above the 11.5 million Ecus of EEC aid already made available.

On health issues, a World Health Organization representative who had just returned from Romania, pointed out that the list of medical needs took into account only the strict minimum requirements to face the continuous accumulated shortage of such material caused by systematic deprivation in the country.

Mr. Aroneanu also mentioned how urgent it was to relaunch agriculture and to increase the country's livestock. He also requested the participants to convey to their governments and organizations the need to assist Romania in educating its young people, to give them a chance to acquire technical and scientific training, and thus enable them "to emerge from the twenty years of forced isolation and obscurantism imposed by the dictatorship". The country needed to put emphasis on economic, technical, scientific, cultural and social co-operation so as to restore the national economy and use existing resources in the most efficient manner.

In reply to questions from government representatives, he pointed out that the initial rehabilitation phase was likely to last a few more months but would not extend beyond the end of 1990. He was unable to give details, at that point in time, on what kind of aid would be required in the long term. He assured the international community that donated food aid would in no way adversely affect the agricultural production of Romania in view of the enormity of immediate needs.

The Director of UNDRO, who chaired the meeting, announced that the total value of emergency assistance for Romania made known to UNDRO, including Red Cross aid, totalled more than a hundred million dollars.

At the end of the meeting, Mr. Aroneanu thanked the international community for all its help. He expressed the fervent wish of Romania to once again join, permanently, with dignity and renewed hope, the large family of free nations and democracies. ■

Consultative Meeting on UNDRO/NGO Co-operation

The importance of a co-ordinated and effective strategy for disaster relief and disaster mitigation was stressed at a meeting of Non-Governmental Organizations convened in Geneva by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, UNDRO, on 1st and 2nd March 1990.

In his opening address, the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, Mr. M'hamed Essaafi, underscored the importance of increasing co-operation between NGOs and UNDRO in order better to achieve their common humanitarian objectives. The "Consultative Meeting on UNDRO/NGO Co-operation" was intended, he said, not to set up a new mechanism, but to refine, develop and improve the existing co-operation. "We cannot fully accomplish our task without your collaboration and that of all those who are involved in emergency management," Mr. Essaafi said.

Participants at the meeting considered the conclusions and recommendations reached at the meeting of officials in charge of National Emergency Relief Services (NERS III), convened by UNDRO last October, which stressed, *inter alia*, the importance of unified appeals for emergency assistance and the need for concerted relief programmes. UNDRO's Director and Deputy to the Co-ordinator, Mr. Ferdinand Mayrhofer-Grunbuhel, in his introductory remarks, said that the systematic collaboration of NGO representatives in the field was "crucial for providing a complete picture of damage and needs" in a disaster-stricken country. In order to provide better guidance for donors, it was also essential to reach a consensus on relief requirements, and, ideally, this should lead to a single appeal.

In the field of disaster relief, a number of questions were reviewed in depth including the recurrent problem of unsolicited emergency supplies, the local purchasing of relief goods and the usefulness of emergency stockpiles. In this connection, UNDRO was asked to draw up an inventory of existing stockpiles, with a view to enabling organizations to borrow from one another in case of need. There was general agreement that to the extent possible, relief supplies should be purchased in the disaster-stricken country or neighbouring countries. It was also suggested that UNDRO could seek to obtain favourable exchange rates and, generally, better working conditions for humanitarian organizations operating in the field.

At UNDRO's request, a presentation of the Non-Governmental Organizations' views with regard to UNDRO's activities was made by the Secretary of the LICROSS/VOLAGS Steering Committee for Disasters. He endorsed the use of "disaster management teams" in disaster-prone countries to provide collective judgement on damage and relief requirements, stressed the need to communicate with the mass media at an early stage of any disaster relief operation, and made a number of suggestions concerning the contents and format of UNDRO "Situation Reports".

For its part, UNDRO indicated that full consideration would be given to these and other suggestions made during the meeting. This was followed by a presentation of UNDRO's electronic communications network, UNIENET. UNDRO's efforts to improve further the flow of information and its means of communication as "the best mechanism to ensure co-ordination" were discussed.

On the second day of the meeting, UNDRO/NGO co-operation in disaster mitigation was reviewed in

some detail and, finally, the "paramount" role which NGOs are expected to play in helping to achieve the objectives of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, IDNDR (1990-2000), was described by the Officer-in-Charge of the IDNDR Secretariat, which operates in close association with UNDRO.

Among the areas in which the specific status, expertise and diversity of non-governmental organizations could be put to use successfully to help achieve the Decade's goals, the following were listed:

- NGOs could actively assist in the establishment of national committees where this has not yet been achieved. Within the committees the experience of NGOs in the field of disaster management is indispensable to create an awareness, among all sectors of society, of what natural disasters mean to an affected country.

- NGOs have developed over the years excellent working relations with sister organizations, other partner organizations, or individual counterparts in recipient countries, and could assist in developing further NGO-structure in disaster-prone countries to form bodies that can draw the general population into the Decade's implementation.

- NGOs can define the requirements for disaster management based on their long-term experience and thus help science and technology to present applicable, feasible and operational solutions to problems.

- NGOs can in their own programme development accomplish the required shift to pre-disaster planning while sustaining and further improving post-disaster relief and management capabilities.

- NGOs can contribute to the concerted international effort by co-ordinating their activities amongst each other and by co-operating closely with the UN-system, specially UNDRO and with the IDNDR secretariat.

- A vital role can be filled by NGOs in the field of education and public awareness. Their grassroot contacts will make it possible to transmit the concept of disaster reduction to the population in general, local planners and the private sector - such as construction companies. In this way, they can assist in the move away from the fatalistic acceptance of disaster consequences towards the recognition of the potential for the feasibility of mitigation measures. This would include the awareness of the individual or community groups for the possibilities of self-help and individual protection.

- Finally the NGOs can use their intensive contacts with the media to involve them actively in the dissemination of the Decade's philosophy. This could be particularly propitious in the time following an actual disaster, building on the media's hightened interest, whereby an evaluation of eventual shortcomings could be the basis for improvement with broad public support.

Underscoring the spirit of co-operation and partnership which characterized the gathering, the meeting was chaired jointly by the Executive Director of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, Mr. Anthony Kozlowski, and by the UNDRO Director. Delegates from 30 organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the International Civil Defense Organization took part in the meeting. ■

UN Photo

The Disaster Relief Co-ordinator stressed the importance of increasing co-operation between NGOs and UNDRO to better achieve their common humanitarian objectives.

UNDRO at Work

(15 January to 15 March 1990)

RELIEF: MOBILIZATION AND CO-ORDINATION

■ **Angola**: An UNDRO relief co-ordination officer left Geneva for Luanda to participate in a joint Government/ United Nations Inter-Agency Emergency Assessment Mission from 12 to 21 February 1990. The team visited the provinces of Namibe, Benguela, Huile and Cunene, affected by a severe drought. The purpose of this mission was to assess priority emergency requirements as a base for mobilizing international assistance. Another UNDRO officer visited Luanda at the same time to discuss a computerization project with the Unit for Technical Assistance - Emergency (UTA-E), the government's focal point for monitoring emergency relief operations in the country. UNDRO will be implementing this project by which an information system will be developed to manage data on the government's requirements and donors' pledges.

■ **Cook Islands**: On 14-15 February cyclone "Peni" passed through the southern group of Cook Islands with winds of 90 to 100 knots causing widespread damage to banana and coconut crops and infrastructure. The Government requested emergency relief assistance and UNDRO launched an appeal for international assistance.

■ **Indonesia** - Volcanic eruption: Mt. Kelud (alt.1731 metres) in east Java erupted on 10 and 12 February 1990, emitting an estimated 220 million m^3 of lava, ash and stones. Some 30 people were reported killed by landslides and falling rocks; many houses and buildings were damaged or destroyed in the regencies of Blitar and Kediri. As indicated in an UNDRO information report, close to 43,000 people were evacuated to safer areas.

No request for the mobilization of international assistance was received by UNDRO.

***

Torrential rains: Following torrential rains at the end of January, north Jayapura and Irian Jaya districts of central Java were affected by floods and landslides. The death toll exceeded 150 and 21,000 people were affected. UNDRO issued three information reports. Although the government did not appeal internationally for emergency relief, it indicated acceptance of external assistance for longer-term rehabilitation/reconstruction and resettlement of evacuated population. Contributions reported to UNDRO totalled US $90,000 at the end of February.

■ **Côte d'Ivoire** - *Airlift of Japanese relief goods to Abidjan:* In view of the flow of refugees into the Côte d'Ivoire following disturbances in a neighbouring country in late January, the Japanese Government requested UNDRO's assistance for the organization of an airlift of tents and blankets. As the only available flight was from Paris, the goods were sent by road on 7 February 1990 from UNDRO's warehouse in Pisa, Italy, to the French capital, and loaded onto a plane leaving on 12 February. In Abidjan, a Japanese delegation was present at the arrival of the plane to hand the goods over to the local authorities.

■ **Lebanon**: The activity of United Nations organizations was almost completely halted in February and early March because hostilities in East Beirut kept people in shelters.

The newly-appointed officer-in-charge of UNDP in Beirut reported a critical need for medicaments in clinics, hospitals and for the chronically ill.

■ **Mozambique** - *Inter-agency mission*: UNDRO participated in a UN inter-agency needs assessment mission from 12 to 25 February to assist the Government in the preparation of a 1990/91 emergency appeal.

Rehabilitation work on a rural hospital in Nhamatanda, Sofala province, has been completed and the new hospital was inaugurated, 8-9 February, by the Minister of Health in the presence of ambassadors of donor countries. The Government of Australia provided funds through UNDRO for this project which was implemented by *Médecins sans Frontières, Médecins du Monde* and *Architectes sans Frontières.*

The UNDRO-managed aircraft has flown a total of 28.8 hours in the month of January 1990 transporting emergency relief personnel to Gaza and Zambezia provinces.

■ **Paraguay**: Floods from the river Alto Parana in the southern provinces of Itapua, Misiones and Neembucu affected an area with a population of 120,000.

At the request of the Government, UNDRO launched an appeal for cash contributions to meet the food (in addition to World Food Programme support) and primary health care needs of 6,000 mothers and children over a three-month period.

■ **Philippines**: UNDRO issued two information reports following the earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter Scale which occurred on 8 February approximately 600 km southeast of Manila. One person was reported dead, four were injured, and 34,500 people from coastal villages were evacuated in view of possible tsunamis. The estimated value of damage to infrastructure was US $900,000.

■ **Romania**: On returning from a second mission to Bucharest on 24 January, UNDRO's delegate reported that all 41 districts of Romania were receiving international assistance. By 3 February, more than 46,500 mt of relief supplies had been distributed to the population. On 8 February, UNDRO held an information meeting in Geneva, at which the Romanian Government was represented by Mr. V. Aroneanu, Secretary of the Romanian Central Commission for the Co-ordination of International Assistance. It was attended by 56 representatives of permanent missions, NGO's IGO's and UN agencies. In the course of the meeting the Government of Romania appealed for 100,000 mt of food supplies, health and technical assistance. On 9 February UNDRO issued the last situation report on this emergency. Total value of contributions reported to UNDRO and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) exceeded US $100 million. *(See page 10/11).*

■ **South Pacific** - Tropical cyclone "Ofa" passed through the South Pacific in the first week of February causing much damage in Niue, Western Samoa, Tuvalu, Tonga and other territories in the region. Eight persons were reported killed in Western Samoa, and food crops, buildings and seatracks were severely affected. UNDRO intervened rapidly and issued an international appeal on behalf of the affected countries *(See page 4/5).*

■ **Tunisia**: Following severe flooding in the country, UNDRO launched an international appeal for assistance on 24 January. An UNDRO relief aircraft landed in Tunis on 26 January (*see UNDRO News Jan./Feb. 1990 page 31*) and was one of the first to arrive from abroad. A second UNDRO aircraft, in co-operation with the Government of Japan, landed a day later with 3,000 blankets, tents and other material; a third airlift (financed by EEC) in early February carried 1,275 family tents.

The above was achieved at a total cost of US $641,000 with funds from the Governments of Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the EEC and the OPEC Fund, and an emergency grant from UNDRO. Total international aid communicated to UNDRO, amounted to US $54.1 million, excluding contributions in kind for which no value was indicated. A request has been received from the Government for assistance in disaster preparedness and prevention. *(See under Disaster Mitigation page 19).*

■ **Zambia**: Following a cholera outbreak, UNDRO organized an airlift to Lusaka, on behalf of the Italian Government, with approximately 27 mt of relief supplies. These emergency items (tents, blankets, water containers, jerricans and vaccines) were intended for the overcrowded hospitals within the capital, where the epidemic was the worst. The plane chartered by UNDRO, left UNDRO's warehouse in Pisa, Italy, on 15 February 1990, and arrived the same day in Lusaka. The total cost of this operation amounted to approximately US $288,000.

DISASTER MITIGATION

■ **Afghanistan**: UNDRO sent a consultant to Kabul from 15 January to 4 February for the purpose of reviewing the current operational and administrative structure of the Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP), to suggest recommendations for its improvement and to develop operational policies.

■ **Afrique australe** - *Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe*: Du 20 janvier au 11 février 1990, un consultant et un fonctionnaire de l'UNDRO ont effectué une mission dans ces trois pays dans le but de promouvoir des activités en matière de planification préalable des secours en cas de catastrophe. Les autres objectifs comprenaient:

- l'élaboration d'un programme de formation des agents chargés d'assurer la gestion de catastrophes;
- l'élaboration des grandes lignes d'un Plan national de secours en cas de catastrophes, de plans sectoriels et de l'acte législatif.

■ **Colombia**: An UNDRO consultant carried out a mission to Colombia from 4 to 10 March 1990 in the framework of an UNDRO Disaster Mitigation Project. He advised national authorities in Bogota and Paz del Rio on methods for establishing the nature and extent of main landslide hazards/risks, for producing hazard maps and vulnerability studies of buildings, industrial plants and public utilities, and for identifying possible mitigation measures and community preparedness programmes.

■ **Egypt**: A high-level mission from the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology of Egypt visited UNDRO from 27 February to 1 March to discuss the implementation of a joint UNDRO/UNDP project on disaster preparedness planning. The mission was received by the Co-ordinator and had extensive discussions with specialists from both branches of UNDRO dealing with disaster management and technical assistance to mitigate the effects of disaster.

■ **Nepal**: A Nepalese delegation, consisting of five representatives of the Ministry of Home went on a study tour to Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, in early March, in the framework of an UNDRO project. The objective is to study the existing disaster management structures in the countries mentioned, in particular national, regional, sectoral and contingency planning

(Continued on page 19)

Developing Disaster Awareness in the South West Pacific

by Mike Longworth

The South West Pacific nation of Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides) is no stranger to natural disasters. Active volcanoes, frequent but fortunately small, earthquakes, are constant reminders of the dark side of nature. However, it is the annual threat of tropical cyclones that most concerns the island republic. Recent destructive cyclones such as "Eric" and "Nigel" (1985) and most notably "Uma" (which hit the capital, Port Vila, in 1987) caused considerable loss of life, limb and property to such an extent that, despite the efforts of many international aid donors, the country's basic economy has not yet recovered.

It is against this background that the Vanuatu Meteorological Service (VMS) has sought to improve its capabilities in providing an effective tropical cyclone warning system to the island community. Over the past five years, Vanuatu has been an active member of the World Meteorological Organization's Tropical Cyclone Committee (TCC) for the South West Pacific. In 1989, this Committee produced the final draft of an "Operational Plan" which lays down the organizational procedures for the issue of tropical cyclone warning and advisory messages by the Tropical Cyclone Warning Centre (TCWC) at Nadi, Fiji, for use by all the small island nations within the South Pacific region.

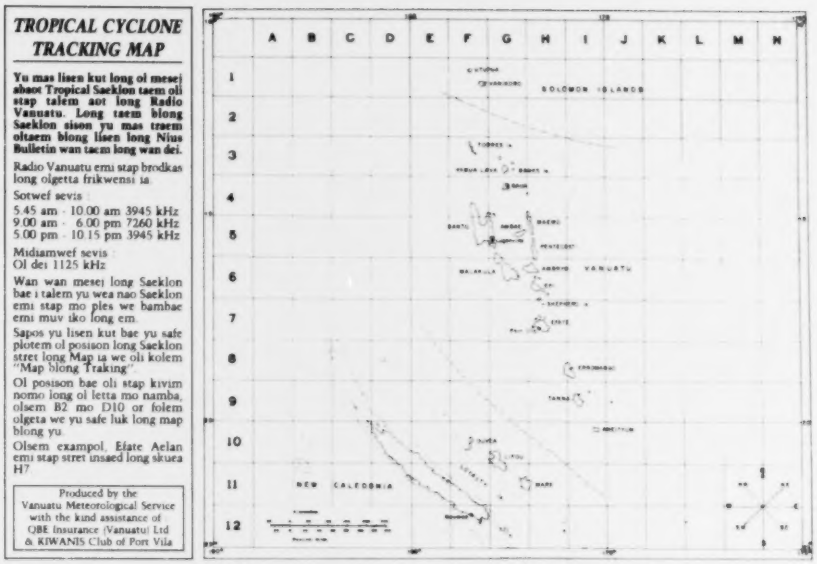
In the case of Vanuatu - because it has some independent forecasting capability - Nadi issues advisory messages which are re-written in dialect for the local population. Other countries, such as Western Samoa, Tuvalu, etc., receive full tropical cyclone warnings which are intended to be broadcast directly by the appropriate authorities.

With most of the smaller Pacific nations, the main method of disseminating tropical cyclone information to the general public is by medium and short wave local radio stations. This is the case in Vanuatu, with other interested bodies - such as civil aviation operators, shipping interest, hotels and tourist trade, insurance companies etc. - receiving their information by telephone. In recent years this method is being replaced by telex and telefax methods. The Vanuatu Meteorological Service always provides tropical cyclone information free of charge to the general public (via Radio Vanuatu) but charges other users for the cost of transmitting that information. The cost per message might be quite small, but during a single tropical cyclone season which might have four or five weather systems giving cause for concern, the overall cost to the VMS could be quite considerable. It is encouraging to note also that none of the recipients of such information have complained about this cost.

It might be thought from the above that the VMS had done all it could in providing a tropical warning service to the community - first in getting an advisory message from Nadi and secondly, in improving on it and in developing more effective methods of locally disseminating that warning to an ever-increasing number of interested parties within Vanuatu. That certainly was the view of the author of this article.

This view, however, changed

dramatically in late 1988, when he participated in a Workshop on Improving Tropical Cyclone Warning held at the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre in Bangkok. Here, a new concept was introduced which was to cause a complete rethink on Vanuatu's approach to disaster awareness and preparedness. The concept was simple - it was not enough for a meteorologist just to issue a warning; he also had "***to ensure it got to its intended audience***"; to "***make sure the audience understood the message***" and "***to make sure that the listeners took some action***". In retrospect, this was self evident, but at the time these were all new ideas.


TROPICAL CYCLONE TRACKING MAP
Yu mas lisen kut long ol mesej abaot Tropical Saeklon taem oli stap talem aot long Radio Vanuatu. Long taem blong Saeklon sison yu mas traem oltaem blong lisen long Niuo Bulletin wan taem long wan dei.
Radio Vanuatu emi stap brodkas long olgetta frikwensi ia
Sotwef sevis :
5.45 am - 10.00 am 3945 kHz
9.00 am - 6.00 pm 7260 kHz
5.00 pm - 10.15 pm 3945 kHz
Midiamwef sevis :
Ol dei 1125 kHz
Wan wan mesej long Saeklon bae i talem yu wea nao Saeklon emi stap mo ples we bambae emi muv iko long em.
Sapos yu lisen kut bae yu safe plotem ol posison long Saeklon stret long Map ia we oli kolem "Map blong Traking"
Ol posison bae oli stap kivim nomo long ol letta mo namba, olsem B2 mo D10 or folem olgeta we yu safe luk long map blong yu.
Olsem exampol, Efate Aelan emi stap stret insaed long skuea H7.
Produced by the Vanuatu Meteorological Service with the kind assistance of QBE Insurance (Vanuatu) Ltd & KIWANIS Club of Port Vila
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
SOLOMON ISLANDS
VANUATU
NEW CALEDONIA

The first reaction was to consider just who our 'audience' was. Once we had realized that 85% of Vanuatu's 160,000 population lives in the rural areas, then the tropical cyclone warning strategy was seen to need some rethinking. On making inquiries it became apparent that although each individual did not necessarily have his own short wave radio on which to listen to the local radio station, there were enough in each village to ensure that any news about a tropical cyclone did not go unheeded. So far so good! The next step however revealed a problem area of which the Meteorological Service and the Disaster Management Office were unaware: the timing of broadcasts. The opportunity was taken in early 1989 to meet the Secretaries of the twelve Local Government Councils at their annual meeting in Port Vila. These Secretaries, as well as being the main government officials in the rural areas, are ex-officio Chairmen of the Area Disaster Co-ordinating Committees. When asked "did everyone listen to the main news broadcast at midday for news of tropical cyclones" the majority of replies was "no, we listen to the evening news, because short wave reception is at its poorest during the day". This came as quite a shock since the VMS had always considered the midday news as the most important, allowing more daylight hours for any disaster preparedness measures which needed to be taken. The problem, fortunately, had a simple solution. The local radio station did actually broadcast on two different frequencies - one essentially for daytime, the other for early morning and late evening. Publicity was given to these frequencies and to the need to retune radios to obtain optimum reception throughout the day.

In order to test whether the standard method of identifying the position and movement of a cyclone was completely understood the Local Government Secretaries were asked to plot on a map the actual position of a particular tropical cyclone at a given time ("250 miles northwest of ...") and where it would be so many hours later ("150 miles west of ..."). The results were disappointing. The VMS had assumed, incorrectly, that everyone was as familiar with the points of the compass as meteorologists are. The exercise was repeated using a modified map (see above) which had each degree square identified by letters and figures. When the plotting exercise was repeated with the additional information "now in square D4 and moving to square F7 by midnight", the audience was immediately able to identify the position of the cyclone. As a result, modified plotting maps were produced in time for the 1989/90 tropical cyclone season (financed by a local insurance company and local businessmen) and widely distributed. These maps also contain details of the correct Radio Vanuatu frequencies to use - written in Bislama (pidgin English), the local language.

Subsequently revised, "Tropical Cyclone Information Sheets" were produced - based on existing Australian and other

neighbouring countries' disaster literature. These were modified in the light of personal and local experiences - such as removing the requirement to have "candles and matches" available for emergency lighting during and after a cyclone's passage. There are enough battery powered torches available nowadays to make the use of candles unnecessary. In addition, more emphasis was placed on the real need to stay away from the sea and flooded rivers, before, during and after the passage of a cyclone. Most of Vanuatu's fatalities over the year had been water-related. These information sheets have so far been produced in Bislama and English (the French version is in hand). The intention is to have copies available in every household in Vanuatu by the start of the 1990/91 cyclone season, providing of course that finances for their production can be secured.

As can be seen from the above, many new disaster preparedness approaches are being tried. Now, with renewed interest of authorities in disaster prevention and preparedness within the context of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR), it is hoped that some of the above ideas will stimulate others to look at their own warning systems to see if improvements can still be made.

Disaster awareness in Vanuatu and in the world is on the increase. But, we must not be complacent. Through the IDNDR, we must know what we are trying to achieve - to provide advance warning, in an easily understandable manner, to as many of the general public as possible. This is already half the battle won towards reducing disaster in the world.

Mike Longworth is Director of the Vanuatu Meteorological Service. He is also Deputy Chairman of the Vanuatu National Disaster Co-ordinating Committee and Chairman of the Vanuatu IDNDR Committee.

The IDNDR in India: From the Patriot Newspaper, New Delhi

'90s For Checking Man-Made Disasters

Bombay, January 6 (PTI)

With the 90s being declared as the 'International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction' (IDNDR) by the Commonwealth Scientific Council, emphasis would be laid in the context of India to work on man-made disasters especially after the Bhopal gas tragedy.

Stating this, Council's Chairman Sir Frederick Warner, who is in charge of the IDNDR programme, told PTI[1] here yesterday that the Council has decided to convene periodical meetings this year, to create an awareness in educating the public as well as the industrialists on how to tackle specific problems related to chemical and other processing industries.

He stressed the need to have emergency facilities in factories along with adequate safety measures, to protect the population in its vicinity.

Since there was no proper compilation of records on natural or man-made disasters, the IDNDR programme, including natural calamities, would make an effort to collect information by studying risk analysis, Sir Warner said. He added that it would help in risk assessment and in minimizing the magnitude of the disaster. At present, the Central Lather Research Institute at Madras has initiated such a study.

Sir Warner said since it was impossible to shift the people living near the factories, it was necessary to evolve methods to prevent toxic substances from escaping in the air.

Sir Warner said tragedies such as Bhopal could also be averted by having tall chimneys through the atmosphere's "inversion" layer for safe dispersal of the gas.

The IDNDR would hold an educational seminar later this year at Madras, he added.

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[1] Press Trust of India

UNDRO at WORK

(Continued from page 15)

models in order to collect ideas for the design of a relevant and applicable model for Nepal.

■ **Tunisia:** After the floods which affected Tunisia in late January 1990 a request was received to send two consultants to that country. The mission from 4 to 14 March 1990 had a double aim:

Preparedness - to evaluate points of weakness in disaster management and to suggest measures for the improvement and updating of the ORSEC plan.

Prevention - to evaluate damage caused by the floods, to suggest flood control and land use planning measures to be adopted to mitigate damage by possible future floods, and to recommend training activities.

■ **USSR - Fourth joint UNDRO/USSR training seminar:** From 18 to 28 February 1990 two UNDRO representatives went to the USSR to draft a project document for a fourth joint UNDRO/USSR training seminar on geological and seismic hazards, disaster preparedness, management and planning. The seminar is scheduled to be held in three cities: Moscow, Alma Ata and Frunze, from 9 to 19 October 1990. For the first time mitigation of losses through insurance against natural disasters and other non-structural measures are to be included in the work programme. The seminar is intended for specialists from disaster-prone developing countries. UNDRO plans to provide five lecturers/discussion leaders to monitor the discussions.

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS, EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND CONTACTS

■ **Disaster Communications**: UNDRO is at present undertaking a full review of its activities with regard to telecommunications for disaster management.

■ In the framework of its disaster communications projects, the Office is planning to acquire a portable satellite radio for use by staff members on assessment missions in countries where the local communications network has been damaged. In this context, an UNDRO co-ordination officer went to Copenhagen, Denmark, where the only European producer of such equipment is located, to discuss technical details and attend a short training course on how to operate the equipment.

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■ An UNDRO representative took part in the UN Outer Space committee meeting, organized in New York on 27-28 February.

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■ In co-operation with the IDNDR Secretariat, UNDRO organized an International Conference on the use of telecommunications including latest satellite technology to improve and speed up the flow of vital information in disaster relief and in disaster mitigation activities.

An exhibition of telecommunications equipment and technical demonstrations took place, at the same time, in conjunction with the conference which was held in Geneva from 19 to 21 March.

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■ An UNDRO representative will take part in the United Nations Workshop on Space Communications for Development, organized in Cuba by the Outer Space Division of the United Nations, in co-operation with the Government of Cuba on 26-30 March. UNDRO has been invited to make a presentation on the Use of Satellite Systems in Disaster Relief Operations.

■ **Visitors to UNDRO's Headquarters in Geneva**, during the month of February included: Mr. Patrice Lafleur, Conseiller, Direction des Organisations Internationales, Ministère des Relations Internationales, Quebec, Canada; Mr. Clark Lance, Chief of Emergency Unit - UNDP/Somalia; and Ms. Kerstin Leitner, UNDP/UNDRO Resident Representative from Malawi. ■

UPDATE

Natural Disasters and Insurance/Reinsurance

by Dr. Gerhard Berz

UNDRO News - January/February 1990 - pp. 18-19

Late additional data on the evaluation of 1989 disasters, have modified the graph and the figures in this article. The last sentence of paragraph one should now read: **The graph shows an average increase from the 60's to the 80's of the frequency by a factor of 5.0, of total economic losses by a factor of 3.1 and of the total insured losses by a factor of 4.8.**

Epidémiologie des catastrophes et déontologie des secours

par Bernard Kouchner

Notre expérience acquise depuis vingt ans dans ce domaine des catastrophes* révèle des progrès constants à l'origine desquels se trouve l'UNDRO mais aussi, il est vrai, l'existence de nombreuses dysfonctions dans la préparation, l'organisation, la conduite et le suivi des secours. Ces effets pervers, nés des abondances excessives de bonnes volontés, gravement préjudiciables pour les pays et les populations déjà éprouvés, sont parfois perçus comme "une catastrophe dans la catastrophe" et placent le gouvernement du pays victime devant une difficulté supplémentaire, tout aussi difficile à gérer que la première. Certaines de ces dysfonctions sont le résultat d'une information erronée sur l'ampleur qualitative et quantitative de la catastrophe. On aura noté à ce propos, que les informateurs, comme les gouvernements, pêchent par excès au début des difficultés et que les chiffres sont en général susceptibles d'être corrigés à la baisse, et c'est une fort heureuse habitude. Les premières annonces entraînent cependant une désinformation de l'opinion mobilisée à l'excès ou de façon erratique, moins sur des constats que sur des rumeurs. Aussi faudrait-il non pas entamer le procès d'une information indispensable en ce siècle de vitesse et d'émotion éphémère, mais s'attacher à une vérité, à une déontologie de la presse et inventer un suivi des événements, singulièrement en ce qui concerne le média suprême : la télévision.

Spécialistes navigant dans des eaux toujours dangereuses et parfois troubles, nous devons être efficaces sans nous en réjouir, savoir prévoir le pire sans le redouter et surtout, vautours des catastrophes, parvenir à détester ce qui devient pourtant la part centrale de nos préoccupations.

Toute rationalisation de l'aide repose sur une bonne maîtrise de l'épidémiologie des catastrophes naturelles

Une approche scientifique du phénomène exige qu'on évacue à la fois le fatalisme propre aux visions métaphysiques de ces désastres et l'exhibitionnisme médiatique propre à l'exploitation émotionnelle qu'en tire une presse avide de sensations.

Cette immédiateté de l'information, formidable succès du progrès, donne l'impression que les catastrophes s'accumulent. Mais les catastrophes naturelles ont affecté l'humanité depuis les temps les plus anciens. Elles furent hier, et parfois encore de nos jours, perçues comme une fatalité, comme une malédiction. Comme une punition divine destinée à sanctionner les comportements humains non conformes. La bible enseigna que Sodome et Gomorrhe furent détruites par le soufre et le feu pour sanctionner leur dépravation. On prétendit que Pompei et Herculanum furent ensevelies sous les cendres expiatoires d'un Vésuve divinement ranimé pour les châtier de leurs moeurs dissolues ? ... L'action humanitaire ne prétend pas déjouer les plans secrets de Zeus ou de Jupiter, elle vise seulement à en mieux percevoir les détours afin d'en réduire le nombre des victimes.

Transcendante sanction du ciel ou triviale éructation de la terre, la catastrophe naturelle relève davantage du probable que du prévisible; de la destinée que de la destination; de l'éventuel que de l'attendu, de l'inopiné que du ponctuel. Ce n'est pas une raison pour la redouter dans la résignation ou pour la gérer dans l'improvisation. Nos responsabilités sont à la fois préventionnelles et opérationnelles, préventives et curatives.

Or on constate qu'en dépit

*NDR

Des concentrations urbaines ... en dépit des mesures de protection qui les entourent, multiplient les effets des catastrophes naturelles. Ouragan Joan, Nicaragua. October 1988

des progrès de la connaissance scientifique et de la parade technologique, la vulnérabilité des sociétés contemporaines à ces catastrophes ne s'est pas réduite. Elle s'est même amplifiée.

D'abord, la croissance démographique offre des populations de plus en plus nombreuses en proie aux éléments, dans les tremblements de terre, les cyclones et les typhons, les inondations, les avalanches, les sécheresses, les infestations d'acridiens ou les incendies ... Nous sommes 5,5 milliards d'individus ayant, un par un, droit à la- ou à une vie. Dans trente ans, nous serons 10 milliards. **Ensuite,** donc, les concentrations urbaines et les fragilités de certaines installations industrielles, en dépit des mesures de protection qui les entourent, multiplient les effets des catastrophes naturelles en provoquant un cataclysme industriel qui se surajoute aux désastres naturels : effondrements d'immeubles d'habitation très peuplés; ruptures de barrages, d'oléoducs d'entrepôts et d'usines chimiques ou de centrales nucléaires. Ainsi Tchernobyl, dont les conséquences réelles ne sont pas encore vraiment connues. **Enfin,** des risques secondaires sont générés par la lutte engagée contre le fléau initial. La paralysie des communications est provoquée par l'afflux de secours désordonnés. Une charge supplémentaire est, je l'ai dit, constituée par la présence massive de sauveteurs improvisés, mêlés aux sauveteurs expérimentés sur les lieux des sinistres. Fondateur et défenseur des organisations non gouvernementales (ONG), je suis sur ce point formel. Vive les amateurs, rapides et décidés. Oui ! Mais attention aussi aux amateurs !

Des méthodes rigoureuses d'évaluation des dommages et des besoins sont indispensables à une gestion convenable des catastrophes

L'approximation et l'empirisme sont-elles inévitables dans l'urgence ? On ne saurait prétendre les supprimer et espérer des opérations de secours parfaitement sur mesure. Mais on peut les réduire. Nous savons d'expérience le type de besoins propre à chaque catastrophe. Il est bien évident que les besoins alimentaires ne sont pas les mêmes suivant que l'on est en présence de tremblements de terres ou d'inondations. Les premiers affectent peu les récoltes. Les secondes les détruisent considérablement. Ce que nous ignorons au moment de l'alerte ce sont : l'ampleur quantitative du sinistre, son étendue géographique, et l'état des communications sur place. Ampleur, étendue, état susceptible de variations rapides. Et nous ne connaissons jamais *assez* le niveau antérieur des réserves humaines et matérielles du lieu.

Le travail de logisticiens entraînés, dépêchés sur place avec les premiers secours, et le cas échéant, avant eux, permet souvent de mieux cibler les efforts nationaux et internationaux. Il autorise une programmation des envois en fournissant des données fiables sur ce qui s'est réellement passé, sur le nombre des victimes, des blessés, et sur leur accessibilité, sur les possibilités de

les regrouper et de les orienter vers des lieux de soins spécialement établis ou adaptés. L'identification du type de besoins spécifiques, de leur échelonnement dans le temps, de leur déploiement territorial, des moyens logistiques locaux ... est la condition indispensable d'une opération de secours utile et efficace. La qualité des informations fournies dépend des équipes qui les recueillent. La présence sur place des représentants de la famille des Nations Unies et des grandes ONG expérimentées, organisés en **équipes anti-catastrophe,** améliore la fiabilité des renseignements.

Mais la rigueur des évaluation est vaine si elle n'est pas assortie d'une déontologie de l'information

La télévision et la presse, en centrant chaque jour, parfois à chaque heure, l'attention mondiale sur le sort des victimes, contribuent de façon décisive à stimuler l'aide internationale, à mobiliser les générosités, à recueillir les aides en nature ou en espèce. Elles suscitent l'action des organisations humanitaires. On l'a vu lors des événements de Roumanie; lors des tremblements de terre du Mexique ou d'Arménie; au passage des ouragans Gilbert et Joan qui ont dévasté les Caraïbes; pour les inondations au Soudan ou au Bangladesh ...

Catalyseurs de la charité, déclencheurs de l'action, baromètres de la situation, les médias exercent une grave responsabilité si, par manque de rigueur, parfois par manque de moyens de vérification, elles laissent filtrer des informations grossièrement erronées sur les catastrophes ou qu'elles amplifient sans nuances la marge d'erreur propre à l'appréciation de toute situation de crise. L'exagération dans les informations relatives aux catastrophes naturelles, comme dans les conflits armés n'est pas sans effet à long terme en ce qu'elle entamera un jour les élans devenus soupçonneux et les charités transformées en méfiances.

Je voudrais attirer l'attention sur quelques **difficultés de la coordination et de la concertation** dont la solution fait intimement partie de la déontologie des secours. Lors d'une catastrophe naturelle, l'assistance et l'aide en provenance de nombreux pays se présente sous des formes très variées. Elles est apportée par des organismes eux-mêmes fort disparates.

On connait la persistance du problème que constitue l'envoi de secours non sollicités ou inadaptés, et les difficultés qu'éprouvent gouvernants et organisations humanitaires à dissuader les donateurs d'effectuer de tels envois. L'exemple bien connu des sandales de plage reçues en même temps que les premiers flocons de neige par les arméniens de Iérévan durant l'hiver 1988 devrait inciter à davantage de contrôle à la source, de mise en garde et de responsabilisation des gestes de charité. Il conviendrait de le rappeler par voie de presse à chaque catastrophe, et d'orienter les générosités vers des dons en espèce immédiatement utilisables pour l'achat de denrées ou d'équipements correspondant parfaitement aux nécessités locales, et de limiter les dons en nature aux couvertures ou à des produits neufs limitativement identifiés, dont le besoin aura été établi officiellement. Je sais que le Bureau du Coordonnateur des Nations Unies pour les secours en cas de catastrophe (UNDRO) étudie les règles générales concernant les dons en nature et que les rapports de situation qu'il diffuse vont dans le même sens. Ils rencontrent les initiatives nationales. La France estime qu'il est un devoir moral pour les gouvernements d'organiser une **précoordination nationale,** avec les ONG, afin notamment de favoriser le regroupement des secours, leur harmonisation et leur adéquation aux nécessités. Cette précoordination aurait également pour objet, sous la responsabilité de chaque Etat, d'adresser des secours gouvernementaux unifiés et de qualité. Elle viserait à réguler l'intervention des ONG originaires de ce pays en s'efforçant de dissuader le départ des moins performantes et de favoriser l'intervention des plus expérimentées. Il serait sans doute utile que chaque gouvernement fournisse à l'UNDRO des listes d'ONG agréées en permanence et une liste complémentaire selon le type ou la localisation de la catastrophe.

Enfin, il est une question qui me tient à coeur et dont on ne peut faire l'économie dans une approche intégrée de la décennie. En effet, comment organiser utilement des secours sans **un droit d'assistance humanitaire permettant l'accès aux victimes en toute circonstance.** Un tel droit est tout aussi indispensable que les règles techniques. De nos jours encore, les *interventions humanitaires,* non-armées, conduites selon certains critères restrictifs, en faveur des populations victimes de catastrophes, de conflits ou de violations de leurs droits ne peuvent se dispenser d'être sollicitées par l'Etat d'accueil ou autorisées par lui.

Reprenons les scénarios classiques : les médecins et les sauveteurs sont prêts à partir. Ils le sont toujours. Ils disposent des moyens matériels et techniques pour sauver les victimes ... Hélas, celles-ci sont souvent de l'autre côté d'une ligne infranchissable. Elles vont mourir. D'autres mourront aussi. Elles seront des dizaines de milliers, des centaines de milliers peut-être, qu'on aura laissées à l'agonie ou handicapées à jamais, dans d'indicibles

LRCS Photo

Le libre accès aux victimes est indispensable ... il faut faciliter l'apport de nourriture, de médicaments ou de soins médicaux.

souffrances, à portée de main des sauveteurs.

Le gâchis est à la mesure du nombre de vies qui auraient pu être épargnées sans cette ligne. Une ligne imaginée par les gouvernants pour protéger la fragile souveraineté des Etats contre les convoitises territoriales. Une ligne rigidifiée jusqu'à l'absurde en ce qu'elle condamne des pans entiers d'une des composantes de l'Etat : sa population. Les gouvernements s'estiment-ils donc propriétaires des souffrances qu'ils administrent ? Nous pensons le contraire : la souffrance des hommes appartient à tous les hommes.

Les règles juridiques subordonnent généralement les opérations de secours à la requête de l'Etat, sauf pour le sauvetage en mer ... L'ordre juridique international privilégie davantage les intérêts d'Etat que les valeurs humaines, et il faut être bien conscient que, pour passer du plan de l'éthique à celui du droit il faudra encore solliciter l'action normative des gouvernements. Consciente de cette exigence, la France a permis de franchir un pas important dans le long processus de reconnaissance du droit d'assistance humanitaire. Le 8 décembre 1988, l'Assemblée générale de l'O.N.U. a adopté par *consensus*, à mon initiative, la résolution no. 43/131 sur l'*assistance humanitaire en cas de catastrophes naturelles et situations d'urgence du même ordre*. Coparrainé par 32 autres pays qui se sont associés au projet français, son contenu, largement innovateur, fut alors perçu, dans les milieux diplomatiques et par les organisations caritatives, comme une manière d'événement auquel on ne croyait plus beaucoup. Et le lendemain, l'U.R.S.S., pour la première fois, s'ouvrait à l'aide internationale. En Arménie.

La logique de ce texte part d'une évidence : les catastrophes naturelles et situations d'*urgence* du même ordre ont des conséquences graves sur les plans économique et social pour tous les pays touchés. Par conséquent, laisser leurs victimes sans assistance humanitaire "représente une menace à la vie humaine et une atteinte à la dignité de l'homme". Les Nations Unies se déclarent convaincues que "la rapidité permet d'éviter que le nombre de ces victimes ne s'accroisse tragiquement". On sait que les organisations caritatives regrettent souvent d'arriver trop tard ... lorsqu'elles peuvent arriver.

Le principe de libre accès aux victimes est précisément la partie "révolutionnaire" (selon un des délégués soviétiques à New York) de ce texte. L'Organisations des Nations Unies invite en effet les Etats concernés par une telle assistance à en faciliter la mise en oeuvre, notamment par "l'apport de nourriture, de médicaments ou de soins médicaux, pour lesquels l'accès aux victimes est indispensable". Selon le nouveau document humanitaire, le libre accès oblige aussi bien l'Etat concerné que les Etats voisins, limitrophes, sollicités de participer étroitement aux efforts internationaux de coopération avec les pays touchés, "en vue d'autoriser le transit de l'assistance humanitaire". Je voudrais à cet égard rendre hommage aux autorités bulgares qui ont, lors de récents événements, considérablement aidé l'acheminement des premiers secours français à la Roumanie. Ce principe de libre accès ne signifie évidemment qu'un simple droit de passage. Il correspond aussi à l'idée émise, notamment par la Commission indépendante sur les questions humanitaires internationales que présidaient Sadruddin Aga Khan et Hassan Bin Talal, de pouvoir, le cas échéant, utiliser des *couloirs d'urgence* pour atteindre rapidement les victimes.

Book Review

Multilingual Dictionary of Disaster Medicine and International Relief

(English, French, Spanish, Arabic)

By S.W.A. Gunn, 1990. Kluwer Academic Publishers, P.O. Box 322, 3300AH Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

In recent decades, natural, technological and other disasters have been increasing in frequency and magnitude, and the involvement of international organizations and professionals from different disciplines has been growing in parallel.

Communication among these people and an understanding of the varying terminology of the many professions and activities are paramount.

It is to this end that this multilingual, multidisciplinary Dictionary serves as an invaluable tool for the disaster manager. A pioneer in Disaster Medicine, Dr. William Gunn has conducted numerous emergency missions for the United Nations and other agencies. Formerly Head of Emergency Relief Operations of the WHO, he is currently Vice President, European Centre for Disaster Medicine. This Dictionary has been tested in the field and in training courses over many years. Thus, more than mere definitions, the twelve hundred entries clearly defined here in fact establish the standard vocabulary of disaster management in key languages and will be of great help to all those involved in emergency humanitarian endeavours.

The UN General Assembly has declared the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction; this book is a most valuable contribution to that initiative and to the tasks of all those who strive to lighten the burden of disasters.

World Health Organization
Regional Office for Europe - Copenhagen

Rehabilitation Following Chemical Accidents: A Guide for Public Officials (37 pages) is a condensation of many years of WHO-initiated work in the area. It identifies the various facets of rehabilitation programme that are likely to require some action in most situations. It also outlines the major problems to be addressed and ways by which they might be approached. This volume is meant to assist the public officials responsible for managing a rehabilitation programme to mobilize available resources more quickly, to achieve more complete coverage of various aspects of the task, and to take more effective action than could be expected by a totally *ad hoc* approach.

(ISBN 87-7437-250-5)
Can be obtained direct from:
FADL Publishers, Prinsesse Charlottesgade 29, Copenhagen N, Denmark. Postal Giro: 05 10 48 82. Telephone +45 31 356287.

Courses, Seminars & Conferences

Health Emergencies Preparation Courses

The medical department of MSF-Holland is organizing two Health Emergencies Preparation Courses from 17 April to 4 May 1990 and from 24 September to 12 October 1990.

The courses aim at giving doctors, nurses and midwives the necessary skills and attitudes to cope effectively with health emergency situations in natural or man-made disasters, and with the rehabilitation of health services after acute phase of an emergency.

For further information, write to:
MSF-Holland, Reguliersbreestraat 12, P.O. Box 10014, 1001 EA Amsterdam, Holland. Telephone: (020) - 251272, Fax:(020) - 205170, Telex: 10773 MSF Nl.

Third International Course on Health and Disasters

Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters
A World Health Organization Collaborating Centre - July 1990, Brussels

Overall focus will be the application of newly developed standards and techniques for rapid assessment of health needs.

Conventional topics of prediction, risk analysis, public health and epidemiology within the context of development, will be addressed.

This two-week, limited enrolment course, will be held in English by means of presentations, workshops, case studies and demonstrations.

Participation is invited from senior health professionals in NGO's, academic institutions, local or national governments and international organizations.

Microcomputer Course. A one week introductory course in health applications of the microcomputer is planned for the week following the Third International Course.

For further information please contact:

Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters
School of Public Health, University of Louvain
30 Clos Chapelle-aux-Champs
EPID 30.34, Brussels 1200, Belgium.
Tel:(2) 764-3823, 764-3327; Fax: (2) 764-5322;
Telex: B23722 UCL WOL.

Co-sponsored by:

Agency for Cooperation and Development, Goverment of Belgium, World Health Organization, Geneva.

In support of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

"La préservation du patrimoine architectural en terre"
Grenoble (France), 17 septembre - 5 octobre 1990

Ce cours vise un public professionnel international de haut niveau : conservateurs, architectes, archéologues, ingénieurs et techniciens responsables de la conservation des sites archéologiques et des structures historiques en terre.

L'objectif principal est de développer une approche méthodologique du problème. Le cours est composé de quatre grandes parties. Une première partie développera les principes généraux de la conservation à travers le prisme de l'histoire et fixera le cadre théorique du concept de préservation. Dans une deuxième partie, la connaissance du matériau terre ainsi que des modes de construction sera approfondie. Dans la troisième partie l'initiation à l'expertise s'appuiera sur les pratiques d'observation de la pathologie de bâtiments. Enfin, dans la quatrième partie seront développés les principes généraux de la préservation et de la rehabilitation, qui permettront de reformuler les recommendations internationales.

CRATerre-EAG
Centre International de la Construction en Terre
ICCROM
Centre international d'études pour la conservation et la restauration des biens culturels

Pour plus d'information, contacter:

Marina Trappeniers
CRATerre-Coordination de la formation
10, Galerie des Baladins
F-38100 Grenoble

Workshop on Earthquake Hazard
Assessment for Planners and Emergency Managers
Genoa, Italy - May 7 - 11, 1990

Objectives

To help emergency managers improve their understanding and ability to use existing earthquake-hazard maps in planning practices that will help to mitigate the earthquake hazard for new and existing development.

To promote the development and use throughout the Mediterranean region of the best seismic microzonation maps that current science and technology can produce.

Facilitator:

Mr. Walter Hays
Geological Survey
U.S. Department of the Interior
Geological Survey
Reston, Virginia 22092, U.S.A.

Colloquium on Environmental Management and Natural Disaster Reduction
Washington D.C, U.S.A. - May 17 - 18, 1990

Maintaining environmental quality and managing disaster risk is essential for communities and ecosystems to remain resilient to natural hazards and for development projects to be sustainable. As environmental degradation and disaster vulnerability continue to rise, the international community is beginning to take action to protect the environment and its natural defenses against extreme events. The United Nations' designation of the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction is one important vehicle offering the leadership and spirit of co-operation for solutions to be sought.

Experts in the areas of the environment, disasters, and development will gather for this two-day meeting to explore the relationship between environmental degradation and disaster vulnerability, and to search for effective, environmentally-based strategies to manage risk.

Topics will include:

The impact of Environmental Degradation and Global Climate Change on Vulnerability; Promoting Disaster Mitigation through Environmental Management; Co-ordinating Efforts in Environmental and Disaster Management: The Role of International Institutions; The Economics of Managing Natural Hazards; Risk Management for Disaster Reduction in Developing Countries; Institutional Strengthening from the Local to theInternational Level; Issues in Disaster Reduction Technology Transfer; The Effects of Disasters on Poverty.

Case studies to promote disaster management training worldwide will be discussed in small workshop settings.

For further information:

Mrs. Alcira Kreimer, The World Bank
1818 H Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20433, U.S.A.

Disaster Management Residential Workshop
Oxford Polytechnic, United Kingdom - 17 June - 21 July 1990

Building from the Disaster Management Centre's extensive in running training workshops (in Oxford annually since 1982, and in the Philippines, India, Bangladesh, Tanzania, USA, Switzerland and Mexico) - the following programme has been developed for 1990.

This is focused on the needs of senior officials within government and non-governmental agencies who would like to receive a full exposure to the various processes involved in disaster planning, or in the development of local training programmes.

The workshop in 1990 lasts for five weeks, but participants may wish to attend for shorter periods of say 2 or 3 weeks to suit their specific needs and time constraints.

Two parallel themes will be followed throughout the programme:

The **Integrated Disaster Management** focus will be of particular interest to individuals involved in disaster planning for all types of fast-impact, long onset, or technological disasters, or refugee emergencies.

The focus of the **Development of Local Training in Disaster Management** will be useful to individuals involved in establishing or operating local training programmes at various levels in Disaster or Refugee Management.

Details from:

The Secretary, Disaster Management Centre
Oxford Polytechnic, Dept. of Architecture
Headington, Oxford OX3 0BP,
United Kingdom.

International Seminar "The Safeguarding of Human Persons and Civil Defence"
Taormina, Italy - 5 - 7 April 1990

(The International Institute of Humanitarian Law of San Remo, in co-operation with the Italian Red Cross)

Provisional Agenda

Assistance activities of civil defence in peace time and armed conflicts (protection of human life and health in emergency situations), in particular in co-operation with the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

The role of volunteers and voluntary organizations in the performance of civil defence tasks.

The International status and international co-operations of civil defence.

For information please contact:

Dr. Ugo Genasio
Secretary General
International Institute of Humanitarian Law
Villa Ormond, Corso Cavalotti 115
18038 San Remo, Italy
Telephone (184) 541848
Cable: HUMANLAW SANREMO
Fax: (184) 541600

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